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ADOPTIONS AND REJECTIONS UNDER THE COMMISSION STATUTE OF NEW JERSEY

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The results obtained thus far in the elections held in New Jersey upon the adoption or rejection of commission government are full of interest, and though the record in the six big cities of the state is four to two against commission government, it is nevertheless full of encouragement for commission government advocates, as a little attention to some of the election details will quickly prove.

The order in which the elections in the six cities were held and their results were as follows: Bayonne (population 55,545), for commission government 2,212, against 2,217, majority against 5. Trenton (population 96,815), for 6,792, against 4,890, majority for 1,902. Hoboken (population 70,324), for 2,969, against 4,922, majority against 1,953. Jersey City (population 267,779), for 11,585, against 13,068, majority against 1,483. Passaic (population 54,773), for 1,792, against 861, majority for 931. Paterson (population 125,600), for 4,917, against 7,984, majority against 2,967. These results have been the cause of great glee to the opponents of commission governments, particularly the defeats in Bayonne, Hoboken and Jersey City, all of which are in Hudson County and just across the Hudson from New York. The victories in Trenton and Passaic speak for themselves and little needs to be said about them except that in both cities hard and intelligent campaigns were waged.

In Paterson the result was a foregone conclusion and the verdict there had in a way practically nothing to do with commission government. Only four years ago Paterson changed its system of city government by placing in the mayor's hands all power to make appointments, thus doing away with the divided plan of a mayor, and an independent street and water board, such as Jersey City still has. Paterson's mayor under the new system has given a very satisfactory account of himself and the city's undeniable improve-

ment under the new plan, as compared to the conditions four and more years ago, made altogether too difficult the problem of convincing the citizens that still another change should be made. As a matter of fact, Paterson, under its present system, with its centered responsibility in the mayor, has already many of the essential features of commission government.

It is in Hudson County that commission government has apparently been overwhelmed. Yet the explanation is easy. It is all in the count. The three Hudson County elections were all held under election conditions that have prevailed here for years, but have now been absolutely changed by a new election law, requiring proper registration, civil service for election officers, and removing the election officers from the control of the machines. Both machines fought commission government in all three cities and were actively helped by their own election boards. A detail or two will be enough to tell the story.

In Bayonne commission government lost by five votes only, but in the recount it was discovered that one ballot box held fourteen more ballots than there were voters in that district. In Hoboken reliable information has been secured that eighty fraudulent votes were cast in one district and the investigation of the election that has so far been made shows over thirty-five hundred new voters since the last election, every one of them fraudulent. Only those who voted last year could, under the law, vote at the commission government election. The highest total vote in Hoboken last year was for councilmen and was 9,259. A complete canvass of this poll list shows that 4,854 of this number did not vote at the special election. Yet 7,944 did vote and these added to those who did not vote make 12,798 or 3,539 more than had any right to vote. In Jersey City commission government was defeated in the first, second and third wards, where fraudulent voting, because of the lodging houses and dense tenement population, has always flourished. In these three wards a majority of 3,719 was rolled up against the proposed change in the system of city government though no city so sorely needs such a change as does Jersey City. But even with this great help commission government was beaten by only 1,483, a victory for the machines so meagre that the politicians were dumfounded.

Election frauds in Hudson County, where they have flourished

many years, are practically over now. The new election law has made many of the old tricks impossible, and with election officers no longer in the absolute control of the machines, fair and honest counts will hereafter be the rule and not the exception. There is scarcely a man who worked for the adoption of commission government in Hudson County who is not firmly convinced that an honest count would have given commission government the victory in both Jersey City and Bayonne, and even in Hoboken those most concerned in the campaign for commission government give it as their opinion that an honest election would have given them the victory also. What has been thus far brought to light seems to justify these beliefs.

Anyone who argues from the election results that the large cities of New Jersey are opposed to commission government is treading on dangerous ground. In Bayonne, Hoboken, and Jersey City the belief is widespread that when this question is again submitted to the voters, as it will be at the first opportunity, commission government will be adopted by all three cities.